

ON-SITE NEWS: Health Care, Education, B&I, Transportation, Institutions, Recreation

For school foodservice A- isn't good enough; kids deserve A+

Just how bad is the food served in New York City's public-school cafeterias?

The answer depends on whom — or, actually, what — you believe.

When the New York City Department of Health released the results of its nine-month-long inspection of more than 1,000 city school cafeterias last month, local newspapers arrived at dramatically different interpretations of the facts.

The headline of the story reported in *The New York Times*, on an inside page of the paper's Metro section, read "Health inspectors find most school cafeterias clean and their food safe." A teaser on Page B-1 quoted a Department of Health spokesman's comment that "what we found was comparable to what we see in restaurants."

Contrast that report with coverage in the two local tabloids, the *New York Post* and the *Daily News*. "Not Fit To Eat," screamed the front page of the *Post*. Inside, the story headline read "School cafeterias flunk Health Department tests" even though the article stated, deep in the body of the copy, that the great majority of the schools passed inspection "on the first visit — after corrections were made on the spot or promised."

The lead sentence in *The Daily News* article was "School cafeterias that dish out meals to thousands of students are infested with vermin and riddled with unsanitary conditions."

So, is the foodservice pretty bad or pretty good? Actually, it's both.

The facts were indisputable. More than 4,500 vi-



ON-SITE INSIGHTS

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lations were found, about one-third of which were deemed "critical," in roughly 10 percent of the schools' cafeterias. These violations included foods being undercooked and/or held at improper temperatures, kitchens lacking adequate hand-washing equipment, rodents and insects found in kitchens and cafeterias, and foods being held past expiration dates.

The *Times* provided the more complete, unbiased account of the report, echoing the Department of Health's "good but not better" verdict. The *Post* and *Daily News* sensationalized the reports by dwelling on the more outrageous details and filling the copy with the most outspoken comments from parents and teachers.

Readers should not be naive enough to take any of the school-cafeteria articles found in *New York*'s newspapers at face value.

The tabloids use sensational claims to sell papers, and reporters tend to exaggerate details or play up the most inflammatory pieces of information. The *Post* and *Daily News* pilloried the school

district unfairly by overstating the case and leaning too heavily on the worst violations.

On the other hand, it is just as easy to claim that the *Times*, in both the tone of its article and its sources, downplayed a serious situation in the disservice of its readers.

Give the Board of Education credit. It asked the Department of Health to conduct the in-depth examination. Chancellor Rudy Crew was not required to call in that agency. Crew's office said that all violations would be corrected by Aug. 1, in time for the new school year.

However, that does not excuse the *New York City Board of Education*. The board has a serious problem on its hands, one that it became aware of nearly a year ago. It is not enough to say that 90 percent of the schools serve safe food in acceptably clean kitchens, or that school foodservice is on par with restaurants in those matters.

I don't have to eat in a substandard restaurant. Thousands of school-age children have no choice when it comes to their cafeteria. In fact, for a disturbingly high percentage of youngsters, school food is the only food they eat on many days. School foodservices in New York, and in cities across the country, have a responsibility to keep their operations clean.

While the Board of Education and Chancellor Crew can deny the tabloid newspapers' reporting of the story as unfair, they cannot ignore one simple truth: You cannot fan the flames when there is no fire. It's long past time for New York City to put out this fire.

ON-SITE BRIEFS

Aramark 'sells' parents on school food

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — How can school foodservice directors get children to try such a lunch program?

Aramark's managers in the East Bay region of Rhode Island believe one way is to "sell" the children's parents on the program. So Aramark has been inviting parents to programs involving school foodservice.

According to Nancy Roberts, assistant director of foodservice for Aramark in the East Bay region, schools in the region's seven districts have experimented with Parent Lunches and Parent-Child days with and without parents to food fairs held by the cafeteria staff.

The offerings are part of Aramark's Team Nutrition program in the East Bay area.

"It has worked out very well for those schools that have tried it," Roberts said. "It gives the parents both the opportunity to see for themselves what school lunches are like these days and the chance to spend a little more time with their children."

Roberts added that Aramark plans to continue the program next school year.

Sportservice promotes Stib to COO

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Sportservice has geared up for the opening of several new accounts this year by creating the position of director of plans and operations.

Timothy M. Stib has been hired to fill the position, according to Edward Green, chief executive officer of Sportservice.

The company, a subsidiary of Delaware North Co., will be involved in the opening of two new arenas — *Maryland* Midland Arena in Buffalo and Tampa Bay Arena in Florida. Sportservice also will provide catering at the U.S. Open in the National Tennis Center, Flushing, N.Y.

Stib will oversee employee training and corporate support for those new accounts, Green said. In addition, Stib will help implement several strategic-planning initiatives for the company.

Stib had been general manager of foodservice operations for Sportservice at Beach Stadium, St. Louis, since 1991. He joined the company in 1981.

Eurest holds inaugural Dining Academy

CHICAGO — Eurest Dining Services held its first Dining Academy last month at its regional offices here. More than 200 Eurest employees, including district managers, department heads, unit managers and chefs, attended the day-long seminar.

The day was structured like a college curriculum, with students registering for up to four "classes" during the day. Each session lasted 60 minutes, and topics included breakfast, lunch, an afternoon reception and a keynote address by Jim Carothers, president of Eurest.

Classes featured such subjects as accounting, purchasing, client relations and account retention, merchandising, branding, customer satisfaction, and innovative recipes and food-preparation techniques.

Smithsonian Institution, Daka Intl. team up to create 19th-century-themed food court

WASHINGTON — The Smithsonian Institution and Daka International, long known for its celebration of American cuisine.

Daka Restaurants, in conjunction with the Smithsonian, has extended that celebration to include foodservice venues in a historical setting. Early results, according to Daka's new vice president of marketing, Rick Hendrie, indicate the collaboration is a success.

Main Street Cafe debuted last month on the lower level of the Smithsonian Institution's Museum of Natural History. The operation is a food court styled like a 19th-century urban street.

There are four venues — Smithsonian's New York Style Deli, The Pizza Parlor, American Grill and Eastern Shore.

"The museum people wanted something that was unique to them, and we believe we have given it to them," Hendrie said. "The museum is delighted with the concept, and sales are significantly higher than what we were doing before."

The design was a collaborative effort wise learned up the Smithsonian's foodservice coordinator, Roland Bauscher, Cici-Little International, a local architect, and a Daka team, which included Hendrie and resident director of operations, Cindy Stylinski.

Hendrie explained that the venues were designed to appeal to the Smithsonian's key demographics, which are school children and young adults. Daily sales are averaging more than \$16,000, with 30 to 35 percent of business coming from the Grill and 20 to 25 percent being generated at the Pizza Parlor.



Smithsonian's Deli is one of four venues in the new, 19th-century-style food court at the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History.

Smithsonian's Deli is modeled after the Delaware Street Deli, which Daka has developed for use in other accounts. It features a rotating menu of interesting sandwiches and salads, such as a vegetable Dagwood and a bulgar-wheat Waldorf salad with smoked turkey.

At the Pizza Parlor pizzeria, calzones and stromboli are

made fresh each day. All American Grill is patterned after Fuddruggers, Daka International's upscale hamburger chain.

Eastern Shore Market offers Maryland crab cakes, roast chicken and turkey carved to order and a variety of cold vegetables and hot side dishes in a boardwalk-type setting.

CONTRACT CORNER

John Metz on branding



"Branding has come a long way since we installed our first Burger King at the University of Illinois at Chicago many years ago. Branding is no longer just a trend; it has become a way of life in the foodservice industry. Now, more than ever, people want to buy products they know. We are

primarily a service industry, so if this is what our customers want, we have no choice but to satisfy that desire."

John Metz is president of Metz & Associates, Dallas, Tx.